№ 232

ISSUE № 232: Crab Rangoon & The Harmony of the Spheres

About the Assemblage

The FFR is no longer a journal or even a "Necrosign." It's a shared frequency—specifically the sound of a 1988 Mitsubishi Mirage idling in a parking lot at 3:00 AM. We don't curate; we just leave the back door unlocked. We are a collection of "important locals"—those who are durable because we are too tired to be fragile. If the work feels like it's trying to be "Art," we will likely use it to level a wobbly table.

The Staff (The Custodians of the Sink)

- Virgil Kay: Still the Final Arbiter, currently preoccupied with the aerodynamics of a falling bagel.
- Silent Bill: Promoted to *Chief of Tactical Non-Sequiturs*. He handles the "Necessary Pauses" by simply walking out of the room mid-sentence.

- Unkie Bob: Now specializing in *Casual Entropy*. He doesn't sabotage the structure anymore; he just forgets to tighten the bolts.
- The Unnamed Dishwasher: (Not on the masthead). He just crashed in. He's wearing a windbreaker. He's currently scrubbing a scorched pot with the intensity of a man performing heart surgery. Don't look at him. He's the soul of the operation now.

THE PERPETUAL PENDING PLEDGE:

The Review is not for sale; it is freely given. All incoming funds are Sacramental Offerings consecrated not for service rendered, but to sustain the metabolically necessary Obsession8888. Our official registry is no longer numeric; it is an unassailable frequency defined as Vi · ∞ · 432Hz.

SUBMISSION PROTOCOL (CASUAL MODE)

1. The Work: Send us 2 to 953 fragments. They can be poems, paintings, or transcriptions of overheard arguments about bowling.
2. The Presentation: No "Cover Letters" listing your awards. We don't care where

you went to school; we care if you can stand up after taking a hit. Tell us your favorite type of industrial fastener instead.

3. The Offering: The Perpetual Pending Pledge remains. It's still free. But if you must send something, send a 12-inch sandwich.
    - The Kewpie Clause: If there is no Kewpie Mayonnaise on the sandwich, Virgil will use your manuscript to wipe the counter. Kewpie is the only thing standing between us and the "Absolute Cosmic-Cluck."
4. The Delivery: Drop it off. Or don't. The auction is never over, and we're just waiting for the next honk.

Note: If you hear the sound of dishes clattering in the back, ignore it. It's just the frequency of the house.

🐓Digital Park and Ride: Send to fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com

🐓Physical Park and Ride: 250.50∞ State Street, Bangor, Maine, 04401. *ERRATUM: If the 432Hz frequency sounds more like a rattling heat shield on a compact car, do not adjust your ears. The rattling is the poetry. The 9-volt battery is dead. Long live the 9-volt battery.*

"Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco."

— Virgil, The Aeneid

SELF-CONSUMPTION BLUES
THESE LITTLE BUGGERS ARE KINDA CHEWY...
BAND STORD
SISSY GIRLS
adidas

UNIT 4B: THE ALL-THREE EVENT — A SYMPHONY OF CONGEALED CHAOS

Being a Non-Euclidean Meditation on Breakfast, Ballistics, and the Yellow Peril of Polyester

By Maraca Aurelian Severn

Compressor, faucet, and baked-beans tin formed a warped triad. Official designation: The Breakfast Axis of Evil.

In the damp oubliette known locally as Apartment 4B—perched directly above the perpetually weeping laundromat Suds 'n' Sighs—this trinity convened not for tea and biscuits but to unravel spacetime before breakfast. Three sovereign states of malfunction, each a pocket universe of entropy, had ratified a covenant in mineral deposits, bean-juice runes, and the sour sweat of neglected utility bills. They didn't merely break. They performed.

The Compressor—a rust-eaten relic rumored to have witnessed the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, or at least several kitchen renovations—provided the basso profondo: a tectonic rumble that didn't vibrate the floor joists so much as persuade them to audition for Riverdance. Its exhalations smelled of forgotten root cellars and the last gasp of a dying star.

PAUSE — CHEW ON THIS:

Sit with that image. Your floor joists—those silent wooden bones holding up your entire life—decide to tap-dance. Not politely. A frantic, defiant jig. You're pouring coffee. The mug does the Charleston. This isn't noise. It's lumber rebelling. Let it sink in. You'll need it later.

The Faucet, a chrome-plated nihilist with the emotional range of a dial tone, wept incessantly. Not tears—sixteenth-note mists. A relentless pitter-patter that transformed the

bathroom into a cursed botanical exhibit. Limescale stalactites twisted into accusatory fingers. You should have invested in index funds, one seemed to hiss. Instead, you bought ramen.

Then the Baked-Beans Tin. A squat, dented cylinder of prophecy. Within its metallic womb, legumes bubbled in an impossible 7/8 time, punctuated by rogue belches carrying the scent of citrus napalm and existential dread. Occasionally, it murmured: We are the belly of the beast—and the beast has indigestion.

The true locus of chaos, however, was neither appliance nor acoustics, but Bertram P. Fotheringay-Smythe III.

Bertram's physiognomy suggested a man assembled slightly out of sequence. His face was elongated, faintly jaundiced, his posture collapsed inward as if gravity had issued him a private vendetta. His eyes darted like moths trapped in sodium light. When he smiled—

rarely—it bent crooked, mocking the very premise of joy.

Bertram suffered from SITUS INVERSUS TOTALIS. His organs were mirrored. His heart beat on the right, his viscera rearranged as if his body had been diagrammed by a distracted cartographer. The condition was mostly asymptomatic, until it wasn't. It had shaped his gait, his caution, his sense that the world was perpetually about to betray him.

This inversion bled outward.

Where most people placed keepsakes on shelves, Bertram made stranger accommodations. On the bedroom side table sat a small FRUIT BASKET. It held no fruit. Instead: miniature Bertrams—polished plastic replicas, each one a sliver of self. The basket sat where his heart would have been, if his body obeyed convention. A compensatory geography. A visible organ.

He did not explain this to visitors. There were no visitors.

PAUSE — INSPECT THE BASKET:

Look closely. No apples. No oranges. Only tiny Bertrams. Not toys—shards. Each morning he selects one. Swallows it. Not breakfast. Maintenance.

Around his waist floated a LIFE-PRESERVER TUTU, buoyant and absurd, like a cosmos abandoned at sea.

His RAMEN-PACKET ARMOR had been upgraded. Strips torn from a yellow tracksuit—an earlier, less committed version of himself—were woven into the packets. As he moved, polyester shrapnel fluttered.

Fashion, he sighed, is the first casualty of appliance-based warfare.

PAUSE — CONSIDER THE TUTU:

It isn't whimsy. It's flotation. A man whose internal compass is reversed wraps himself in buoyancy. Every step is negotiation.

TABLEAU II: ARMOR, TUTUS, AND THE MARMALADE THIRD EYE

Tenant response: FULL COMMITMENT. No half-measures. No manuals. (The instruction booklet had been burned weeks earlier for warmth and spite.)

Bertram duct-taped an industrial jar of fluorescent-orange MARMALADE to his forehead.

It protruded like a cyclopean beacon of pure Florida Man energy, attracting confused wasps and existential philosophers alike.

It's not a helmet, he informed the empty room. It's a signal. Also, it hides the bald spot.
The life preserver became ceremonial. The armor clacked. The trinity rescinded.

From a jar labeled Mini-Me's (Do Not Consume Before 10 AM or After Existential Dread), Bertram removed a thumbnail-sized version of himself—yellow tracksuit and all—and swallowed it with a shudder.

Gotta keep the self-loathing localized, he muttered. Kafka would understand. If Kafka had shopped at Costco.

He felt lighter. The jar felt emptier.

PAUSE — THE JAR:
Every fragment consumed promises wholeness. Delivers absence.

TABLEAU III: LAUNCH SEQUENCE — OR, HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR MORNING

06:22 HOURS.

Bertram chugged half the marmalade jar. Orange viscosity surged through him, a parody of blood. He screamed upward:
ALL THREE AT ONCE MEANS NO TAKE-BACKS! THIS ISN'T A DRILL—UNLESS THE DRILL IS NAMED APOCALYPSE!

He suplexed the card table through the open window.

The table achieved flight—a wobbling arc over Ohio Street—scattering parking tickets

like confetti at a wedding where the bride was bureaucracy and the groom despair.

PAUSE — FREEZE THE FRAME:

That table isn't falling. It's discovering itself. Bertram followed. Arms wide. Tutu billowing. Marmalade third eye blazing.

Behold! he shouted at a cloud. I am the Icarus of breakfast!

Midair, the trinity defected. The Compressor peeled away. The Faucet hissed farewell. The Beans Tin perched on his shoulder, chanting:
WE RISE!
WE BUBBLE!
WE CONGEAL!

Below, pedestrians formed a spontaneous flash mob.
PORRIDGE! PORRIDGE! PORRIDGE!

For one suspended moment, Bertram hovered—his heart back home in the fruit basket, beating in time with nothing at all.

TABLEAU IV: COASTAL INSERTION

Impact was inevitable.

The Compressor embedded itself in the breakwater.

The Faucet dissolved into surf.

The Beans Tin transformed into a parrot, detonated, and rained marmalade.

Bertram landed amid citrus and salt, tutu shredded, armor smoking. He raised his arms. ALL THREE! WE DID ALL THREE! AND THE BEANS STILL WON!

Pain flared in his right chest. Then passed. Triumph took its place.

PAUSE — THE SILENCE:
Even inverted hearts are allowed a moment.

TABLEAU V: POSTLUDE — THE PAPERWORK OF INSANITY

Back in 4B, the mini-fridge hummed. Parking tickets folded themselves into a paper crane. The radiator sighed.

On the bedroom side table, the fruit basket remained. Tiny Bertrams lay scattered—some melted, some untouched. Redistribution, not loss.

No report was filed. No lesson learned.
Only a man with a reversed heart, who had made space for it anyway.

(Filed, Sealed, and Probably Forgotten By)
THE COUNCIL OF PERIPHERAL MAINTENANCE

(Subcommittee: Multi-Appliance Insurrection & Breakfast-Based Ballistics)
Remember: sometimes the heart finds its place in the most unexpected basket.

THE MUNDANE MACABRE
MOO
ELEPHANTS WANT TO SPANK MY TWO-YEAR-OLD'S BUTT BECAUSE HE CALLED THEIR CALVES "STUPID HORSE BEANS" AND THE CALVES ALL "MOO" NOW

IVAN

By Jacob Schulz

Ivan Klepenheimer used to own this house. Collected books. This is a three-story duplex. Used to be one of those Catholic family wood baron houses. Twelve kids. Anyway, Ivan had a nice job with the Bell telephone company and collected books through dealers, yard sales, estate sales, he never stopped. First editions. American classics. Latin. Early encyclopedias. Everything. He capped the bookshelves with ceramic Tobey jugs. What a delight. I'd fall asleep in one of his big leather chairs with a book Harvard lost in a bid to Ivan. Then Ivan began to change. His head, the way the mouth and eyes sat in his head. He became a hammer head shark.

Floating. I don't judge. He's still Ivan. Ivan's my friend. I just helped turn the pages so he could read the larger books he liked. Gutenberg. Or unroll those scrolls. Ancient papyrus. You know. Then he gets the zoomies. Turns out he's one part hammer head shark, one part jumbo jet. Noisy as all get out. The neighbors complained. He was fined for the noise. He couldn't take it. He flew himself to Arizona. He divides his time in Phoenix and Fort Lauderdale. I got the house. The books. But it's not the same. Sometimes I sleep in the car. Sleep and cry. I miss Ivan.

Peace Offering

By Jackson Bluette

Cap 2 is the graveyard shift for the already interred.

Two nights a week, One Size—Zinemeister of the Tree Streets, Reality Architect emeritus, man who once argued a Xerox into submission—pulls on the safety vest the color of a highlighter that's seen things (things that might include the spectral residue of Harlow Street's former tenants) and reports to the Mal-Wartz warehouse. This is the hour when the building exhales its freight-scented sigh and the fluorescent lights take on the jaundiced glow of a longshoreman with opinions—a glow not unlike that

which once slicked the bar tops of the Devil's Half Acre, where rivermen, their pockets fat with Penobscot-spawned wages, bartered lust like so much cordwood.

Unloading trucks, in Mal-Wartz cosmology, is a ballet performed by refrigerators. The bay doors yawn. The rollers clatter. Pallets arrive shrink-wrapped like cryogenically preserved regrets—regrets not dissimilar to those pressed between the pages of Bangor's ledger books, where, under the sanctified corruption of the Bangor Plan, fines for "disorderly houses" funded civic projects while licensing the city's lungs to breathe vice. Break packs—those shoebox sarcophagi of toothpaste, mascara,

phone cords, and hope—are slit open with a box cutter that has the personality of a feral cat; a cat that might once have stalked the alleys behind 233 Harlow Street, where Madam Fan Jones—Fannie, Nancy, la maîtresse du bleu ciel—held court for fifty years. Her Sky Blue House of Pleasure, its chimneys allegedly daubed azure to guide drunken lumberjacks home like homing pigeons besotted on rye, stood precisely where Seasonal now shelves kayaks destined for dry rot.

The rule is speed. The unspoken rule is faster. The secret rule is you will be observed by someone who learned leadership from a YouTube thumbnail—a modern echo of the

municipal wink that once allowed Bangor, lone oasis in Maine's desert of Prohibition, to swell from eleven saloons to one hundred forty in thirty years, transforming its riverfront into a theatre of brawls, bribes, and bordellos.

Enter the Cap 2 lead: toe-headed, twenty, bristling with laminated authority. He micromanages by semaphore. He narrates the obvious. He invents efficiencies that require three extra steps and a waiver—waivers not unlike those once signed by constables who'd rather collect a biannual fine than arrest Madam Fan, she who moved her "house of ill-fame" from one side of the Kenduskeag's muddy embrace to another, purchasing

her brick fortress for four thousand dollars earned in the currency of sighs. One Size nods, deadpan, caffeine-starved, filing each syllable under Exhibits, The Case Against Youth—And Against the Fleeting Nature of Civic Hypocrisy.

By 10:47 p.m. his shoulders have begun their letter-writing campaign to the spine. By 10:58 he executes the ancient maneuver known as the Ghost. Aisle A-17 to claims to seasonal to the weird cul-de-sac behind Sporting Goods where kayaks go to die—a purgatory worthy of those women whose names cluttered Bangor's rap sheets: 'Common Prostitute,' 'Vagrancy,' 'Intoxication'—the holy trinity of the 1930s, when the Depression turned

survival into a mummer's play performed in doorways thick with frost. He walks a series of out-of-the-way aisles like a priest counting beads (or like a john navigating the shifting geography of a trade forever relocating—Front Street, Exchange Street, Railroad Street—streets now buried beneath parking lots as thoroughly as Fan Jones lies beneath Mount Hope's indifferent sod). He clocks out on his phone at 11 sharp and leaves the toe-headed future waving at a pallet jack.

The '88 Mitsubishi Mirage is waiting, an origami car with the temperament of a library cat. The key turns. The engine considers. One Size drops into Aroostook Artillery. "Sufferin'

blueberries, you start like a one-legged cat in a sandbox," he says, and the Mirage, shamed, complies—much as the women of the Scandinavian Hotel, that notorious Broad Street hive of drink and dalliance, complied with the demands of men whose logs had drowned the river's throat.

Old downtown Bangor is a low-budget soundstage after hours. Brick façades rehearse their lines to nobody. He blinks his lights on a street that remembers more than it tells—a street that remembers the clatter of coin on mahogany, the smell of cheap perfume mingling with sawdust, the particular cadence of Madam Fan's voice soothing a logger whose only words were whiskey and want. Two women

approach the car with the choreography of professionals who've been improvising since the script burned.

"Brown bread and beans," they say, the code delivered with a wink that predates emojis—a wink as ancient as the Bangor Plan itself; a linguistic cipher passed from Fan Jones's drawing room to the heroin-choked flophouses of the 1970s, when urban renewal scattered the Devil's Half Acre like ashes, only for the trade to root anew in the shadows of dollar stores.

"Can't beat it with a stick," One Size replies, and the phrase lands like a handshake passed down through

generations who survived on worse—generations who navigated the ritual fines of the 1870s, the meth-fueled trembles of 2025, the ever-present gnaw of fentanyl. The river still flows; the receipts pile up.

They are joined by a woman whose coat has pockets for forms and patience—a social worker with the eyes of someone who has watched the river take what it wants and then leave a receipt (a receipt not unlike those filed at the county courthouse, where Madam Fan paid her dues to keep her doors open while the city feigned outrage). A pimp emerges from the shadows, a silhouette with ambition, hollering "Hey!" like punctuation—punctuation that might have prefaced

John Thomas's entry into Fan's ledger, he the ex-convict, skeleton-key artist, who shared her bed and her business, a man whose own rap sheet whispered of bank vaults and broken promises.

The Mirage lurches away, tradition clanking in the back seat with the seatbelt alarm—tradition heavy as the stone marking Fan Jones's grave in Mount Hope, a grave untended now, its epitaph erased even as her ghost haunts every transaction under Bangor's sodium-vapor moon.

They take the air route to Calais, night sliding past like a bad documentary—a documentary that skips from the lumber boom's roaring saloons to the

flickering neon of the 1970s, when heroin rewrote the script, and then to today's TikTok-adjacent hustles: motel rooms booked in cash, Craigslist's furtive glyphs, the Nordic Model's hypocritical 'decriminalization' that still leaves women circling the same starving blocks their great-great-grandmothers trod. The passports are spurious but passable—the kind of paper that believes in you if you believe in it—paper not unlike the forged ledgers once kept behind the Sky Blue House, where names were ink-smudged ghosts. Saint John, New Brunswick, receives them with salt and a half-smile. The halfway house is off the books, which is to say it exists where systems don't look too closely—where systems have

never looked too closely, not since the city fathers decided vice paid better than virtue. Someone makes tea. Someone cries in the bathroom and comes out lighter—lighter, perhaps, than the women who serviced the lumberjacks in Fan's day, their lungs thick with the Penobscot's damp, their bodies a ledger of exhaustion.

On the way back, One Size swings through a Tim Hortons drive-through that has seen him before, the window glowing like a confessional. The worker leans out, grin already loaded.

"Pourquoi t'es come back, mon chum?" he asks, in Chiac so thick you could spread it on toast.

“Pour checker si ton café taste encore comme le cul,” One Size says, in Chiac, the dialect deployed as a peace offering—a peace offering not unlike the one Madam Fan extended to every bruised and weary girl she hired: shelter, order, a roof above the eternal transaction.

The cup arrives. He sips. The universe holds its breath.

“I hate tradition,” he says, satisfied—yet he drives back towards a city built upon it: a city where the Devil’s Half Acre has merely donned a polyester uniform, traded its sky-blue chimneys for the flickering blue light of a smartphone screen.—and points the Mirage toward the border, the road

unspooling ahead like a punchline you tell yourself so you can keep going. The same punchline whispered by Fan Jones as she paid her fine at the courthouse, by the heroin-addled woman of '78 pawning her shoes near the old train depot, by the meth-goggled specter shuffling past the Sea Dog Brewing Co. today: We endure. The river flows. The city exhales.

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THE LOWBROW LAUREATE'S LEDGER:

Monocled Mayhem & Muraled Meteorites

Hang onto your knickers, boys and girls, because the elevator is bypassing the penthouse and headed straight for the Twilight Zone! Picture this: You're standing in the kayak aisle of the Mal-Wartz at three in the morning. Your back feels like it was used for target practice by a team of enthusiastic chiropractors. Suddenly–*click-clack, shuffle-ball-change!*–he appears.

It's not a misplaced villain from DC or Marvel. It's not your third grade teacher. It's a three-foot-tall, time-traveling, pint-sized titan of pretense wearing a velvet tuxedo and a monocle that's bigger than his future! And the shoes? *The tap shoes!* Why the tap shoes?! Because every

time he hits the floor, he's drumming out the rhythm of the universe, a percussive Morse code that says, "I'm more important than your pallet jack, and I have the rhythmic receipts to prove it!" He's the Sensed Presence with a top hat and a grudge, and he's here to audit your soul with a *shim-sham-shimmy!*

Here is your docket of scholarly madness, cited with the precision of a diamond-cutter and the soul of a bebop saxophonist:
The Ledger of the Pint-Sized Professor

- **Fardin, Marc-Antoine.** "On the Rheology of Cats." *Rheology Bulletin* 83, no. 2 (July 2014): 16–30.

The Hip Analysis: Is it a solid? Is it a liquid? It's a feline existential crisis, baby! This cat cat is flowin' like a river of fur into a glass jar. If it fits, it sits; if it pours, it roars! It's the ultimate "How-Do-You-Do" to the laws of physics.

- **Harrison, Freya, A.E.L. Roberts, R. Gabrilska, K.P. Rumbaugh, C. Lee, and S.P. Diggle.** "A 1,000-Year-Old Antimicrobial Remedy with Antistaphylococcal Activity." *mBio* 6, no. 4 (August 2015): e01129–15.

The Hip Analysis: Dig this: a bunch of monks in the 10th century were playing "Chopped" with cow bile and garlic! They made a soup so funky it makes the MRSA

superbug scream for its mama. A thousand years of dust, and the cure was sitting in a leaky basement all along. *Nanu-nanu, penicillin!*

- **Smithsonian Institution.** "Burger King Bun Gauge." National Museum of American History, Accession No. 1992.0086.01.

The Hip Analysis: The Golden Compass of the Grease Trap! A plastic halo designed to keep your sesame-seed chariot from getting too big for its britches. It's the ultimate micromanagement of the digestive dream-a circle of power for the fry-cook proletariat!

- **Suedfeld, Peter, and John Geiger.** "The Sensed Presence as a Coping Resource in Extreme Environments." In *Miracles: God, Science, and Psychology in the Paranormal*, edited by J. Harold Ellens, 1–15. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008.

The Hip Analysis: You're on the edge of the world, your brain is melting like a Dali clock, and suddenly—*Shuffle-hop-step!*—the Tiny Tot of Pretense appears to guide you home. Is it a survival mechanism? Is it a hallucination? Or is it just the universe's way of saying, "Hey, Jack, you look lonely, here's a kid in tap shoes to judge your life choices!"

There it is, folks! The full, unvarnished, high-octane truth! Now, shall we take this Mitsubishi Mirage for a spin through the history books, or are we going to sit here and wait for the little guy to finish his encore? *C'mon, cadets! Cats and kittens!* Take it for a drive! And remember, kids, I justified this text on a 1953 model Remington with two sticky keys and the world's last ribbon. You're welcome.